< Jeffrey Gettleman: Reporting From Mogadishu

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Heard on Fresh Air from WHYY

July 1, 2010 - TERRY GROSS, host:

This is FRESH AIR. I'm Terry Gross.

As the East Africa bureau chief for the New York Times, Jeffrey Gettleman spends most of his time covering wars, except, he says, they're not exactly wars. He calls them un-wars, conflicts where terror has become an end, not just a means. Gettleman covers 12 countries, including Kenya, Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, which he describes as the most dangerous place in the world.

He's won two Overseas Press Awards: in 2003 for a story on a Pakistani boy who was kept as a sex slave in an Afghan prison, and in 2008 for reporting on human rights abuses in Ethiopia. In 2004, when he was reporting from Iraq, he was captured and held in Fallujah.

We've been wanting to talk with Gettleman, and his current three-week visit in the U.S. has given us that opportunity. Before we start the interview, which I recorded earlier this week, I want to let you know that Gettleman gives some graphic and disturbing descriptions of atrocities he's reported on in the un-wars.

Jeffrey Gettleman, welcome to FRESH AIR. If most of your time is spent covering un-wars in Africa, how would you describe what an un-war is?

Mr. JEFFREY GETTLEMAN (East Africa Bureau Chief, New York Times): Well, what we're seeing across Africa today is many conflicts, internal conflicts that have an absence of ideology. They're more criminally driven wars.

From the reading I've done and compared to the liberation wars of yesteryear, in Eritrea, in Zimbabwe, in Ethiopia, even in Angola, there were causes back then. And, of course, there was criminality and there was violence and there was gratuitous bloodshed, but it seemed like these rebel movements actually stood for something. They had popular support.

For example in Eritrea, they had classrooms to teach people all sorts of things, like literacy and numeracy. A big part of that liberation movement wasn't just to have a separate country, but it was to revolutionize society. And men and women fought on the front lines together, and a whole society was behind this liberation movement, was behind the rebel group.

Today it's totally different. A lot of these rebel organizations prey upon the people they're supposed to be liberating. If you look in Congo, there's dozens of so-called rebel groups and they have absolutely no popular support.

In Somalia, for instance, you have the Shabab rebel group that is fighting against the government and trying to overthrow the weak transitional government in Somalia, and these guys are widely reviled by the Somali population. They're trying to impose a harsh and alien form of Islam, and the people are chafing under their rule, and they have very, very little popular support.

GROSS: So what we're seeing now is more like militias and warlords as opposed to liberation movements. So what do these warlords want?

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Mr. GETTLEMAN: Well, that's an interesting question. Sometimes, it's not clear. Let's look at the LRA, which is a long-standing rebel group originally from Uganda. It's now terrorizing a wide swath of Central Africa, including Congo, Sudan, Central African Republic. They're even bumping up against the border of Chad.

And this group is different from the liberation movements or rebel groups of yesteryear. For example, they don't want to take the capital. They don't want to take territory. They don't want to rule. They just want resources, and they want to terrorize.

And so, the leader of the LRA is this very elusive fugitive figure named Joseph Koney. He's wanted by the International Criminal Court. He's been wanted for years. And it really seems senseless. The LRA moves through villages. They chop off people's lips. They kill civilians.

I did a story a couple months ago about a horrible massacre in Congo where maybe 300 civilians were killed. It looked like it might have been part of a brutal recruitment campaign, but it wasn't really clear, and the LRA just moved through this arc in eastern Congo, in a very sort of ungoverned, remote area, just hacking their way from village to village, and then they left. And what's the military objective of that?

And there's an interesting tie-in to child soldiers here that as these movements gravitate further and further away from having an ideological root, from having a real cause, there's basically no adults that want to join them. There's no reason to join them.

So then they're left with trying to steal or kidnap or conscript children to fight their wars because no reasonable adult is going to join.

GROSS: In describing some of the atrocities that the Lord's Resistance Army has committed, the army that you were just talking about, you met women who were mutilated. You met women whose lips were cut off by the LRA. How did they continue to function?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: It's horrible. I was in Uganda a couple years ago, and we asked to speak to some victims of the LRA, and very quickly, some elders assembled dozens of women who had been mutilated by these guys. And they live in horrible shame. They're unable to ever forget what happened to them. It's a situation where there's no answers for them. What do you do?

I was just in eastern Congo a couple months ago, and there had been a girl who had been kidnapped and had her lips cut off by the LRA, and she was sitting in this medical clinic in a very remote town. The few aid workers in the town were trying to figure out what to do because she needs help. She needs a plastic surgeon. She needs some way to restore her dignity, and she's living in one of the most cut-off parts of the world.

GROSS: You've been describing the kind of sadism that African militias are responsible for. Do you have any sense of what unleashes this kind of sadism, where people are doing this to their own people?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: I think it's partly a function of very weak states and that when you have these large, ungoverned spaces in very poor countries, these things emerge and they take on an energy of their own.

For example the LRA, it started out in Uganda in the late '80s, when the state was very weak. It hadn't been that long ago that Idi Amin had brutalized the country. There had been a lot of political turmoil. The current government was just beginning to get some traction.

And there were large parts of the country that were still chaotic. And this movement was able to use that as first an excuse to exist and to fight against the government but then as a way to spread and to operate because the government wasn't strong enough.

We see the same thing in eastern Congo. The collapse of that country, one of the biggest countries in the heart of Africa, that borders something like nine different African countries, this stunningly beautiful, lush, rugged place, and it is a basket case because the central government is so weak, and the place has been so traumatized by a brutal colonial rule and then almost 30 years of very corrupt, very dysfunctional leadership under Mobutu, Zaire's former dictator.

And that has left this immense country disconnected, isolated, not functioning in most places, and that's allowed these rebel groups to thrive. And one of the effects of this is horrible violence against women.

Eastern Congo is considered the rape capital of the world. Hundreds of thousands of women have been raped in the jungles there. There really is no end. And it's just like Somalia or Sudan or, you know, what we're seeing in other parts of Congo that as long as there's a very week state government, and as long as there is easy access to weapons, and Somalia is a great example.

It's probably the modern world's longest-running example of a chaotic state with no central government. This is despite billions of dollars, enormous diplomatic attention, you know, one peace effort after

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another, and 20 years later, the place is chaotic and violent and hopeless in many ways, as it was in 1991 when the government collapsed.

GROSS: Okay, so you say that Somalia is, like, the example of the weak state, or in Somalia's case, no state virtually, and how that kind of unleashes this can we describe it as gang warfare?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: Yes and no. I mean, Somalia has been so chaotic and violent for so long, the warfare has evolved. It started out as battles between rival clans, and clan was always a very important part of Somali identity.

And then it became almost ideological or religious-based, and that's what we're seeing today, where different groups adhere to different versions of Islam, and they're fighting against each other, and they have these crossed clan lines, and you have this new sort of axis of conflict.

But the problem is when you have these places that remain mired in this state of anarchy for that long, every day they're like that, it gets harder and harder to re-impose authority, and I've seen it with my own eyes.

In Somalia, people adapt. They get used to the fact there's no central government. Businessmen start schools. Neighborhoods band together to provide their own generators. I even saw, during one of my first visits to Mogadishu, a privatized mailbox where you buy a stamp from some businessman, put it on a letter, stick it in a certain mailbox, and they come and deliver the mail.

So people begin to get used to not having any government. And then you begin to have these vested interests that profit off the chaos. You know, for example, people that have taken over old government buildings and are renting them out, they dont want a new government to show up.

Or people that are importing expired goods or not paying any taxes to bring things in and to sell them on the streets, they don't want a government.

And then you have businessmen and other warlords that have gotten used to having their own, independent power base, purely by force. And they're worried that if there is a legitimate government, they're going to be held to account for all the horrible things they've done, and they're going to be kicked out.

So Somalia is a very obvious example, but what we see in eastern Congo and even in parts of Sudan begin to resemble it, which is if you have no government there for that long, it gets harder and harder to bring it back.

GROSS: al-Shabab is the Islamist group, the radical Islamist group, that's trying to take over Somalia and impose a very harsh form of Islamist law. What is their Islamist agenda?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: Well, al-Shabab started out as a local group. It's not quite clear exactly when they formed, sometime around 2004, 2005, maybe 2006. But they got a lot of popular support in 2007 because the Ethiopian military was occupying Somalia, and al-Shabab was spearheading the resistance to them, and a lot of people appreciated that.

Since then, though, the Ethiopians have left. A moderate, Islamist government, so to speak, has come to Somalia with the support of the United Nations and the U.S., and there's less of an obvious cause now for why al-Shabab is fighting.

And one thing they seem to be driven by is this global jihad mission, where they are attracting people from all corners of the planet to come to Somalia and fight for Islam.

And we've seen a number of American, young American Somalis join their movement. Even non-Somali Americans have come, Western Europeans, people from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Chechnya. There's probably hundreds, if not thousands, of foreign fighters now that are the backbone of al-Shabab.

GROSS: So among the laws that al-Shabab is trying to impose on Somalia are no music, no gold teeth and no bras. I know no music has been applied in other Islamic states. I dont understand the no gold teeth and the no bras.

Mr. GETTLEMAN: It's pretty confusing where they're getting this from. From what I've been told, that any evidence of the modern world is suspect, and I guess women weren't wearing bras in 7th century Arabia. Therefore, al-Shabab doesn't want women in Somalia in Somalia in 2010 to wear bras.

They've been pulling out gold teeth from people, saying that that's un-Islamic. They're making men grow beards in some of the territory they now control. They have killed people for watching TV. They have stoned to death adulterers, and they've cut off hands of teenage thieves.

I was in Mogadishu a couple months ago, and I did an interview with two boys who had their right hand

cut off and their left foot because they had been accused of stealing cell phones. And it was this gruesome, public amputation, where they herded together hundreds of people and there's not a lot going on in Somalia right now, and there's very little entertainment, there's very few public gatherings of any sort.

So these people were sort of pushed together into this, you know, big, dusty, open field. These boys were brought out on gurneys. They were strapped down, and this one kid told me that one of the men who were operating, so to speak, on him had this huge knife with maybe a 10-inch blade.

He said the boy told me it was the kind of knife used to slaughter a camel. And they and two men pulled his arm really tight and squeezed on his wrist, you know, so much that the boy screamed out in pain, and then they just started sawing through his wrist bones with this big knife.

And he said it took like 10 minutes, and he fainted from the agony of it. And now he's left totally helpless, you know, no right hand, no left foot, an oddity in a place where it's hard enough to make a living and survive, and he has to have this stigma of shame of having had this happen to him in public and never really being able to move on from it.

GROSS: What a really horrible description. And I guess this is an example of why you describe Somalia as the most dangerous place in the world.

Mr. GETTLEMAN: Well, there's no green zone. There's no one part of Somalia that's safe. That's the problem.

In some of these other countries like Iraq or Afghanistan, where I've worked, there are conflict areas, there are lawless places, but there's one part of the country that is somewhat stable, where if you needed help, you could get it. In Somalia, that doesn't really exist. You're on your own.

The minute you land at the airport, you have to fill out a form that asks for your name, address and caliber of weapon. And guns rule the place. It's that is the law. It's the business end of a machine gun.

GROSS: My guest is Jeffrey Gettleman, East Africa bureau chief for the New York Times. We'll talk more after a break. This is FRESH AIR.

(Soundbite of music)

GROSS: If you're just joining us, my guest is Jeffrey Gettleman, and he's in the United States for a three-week visit before returning to Africa. He's the East Africa bureau chief for the New York Times.

We've been talking about Somalia, which you describe as the most dangerous place in the world. You've reported from there. You've been there, what, about a dozen times? You say you visited refugee camps, insurgent hideouts, mosques, schools, warlord dens, famished villages.

Mr. GETTLEMAN: Let's not forget the pirates, too.

GROSS: You've talked to one of the pirates who captured that American ship, right?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: That's right, and I met a pirate boss in Northern Somalia last year who had claimed to have captured 25 ships and was part of a secretive pirate group called The Corporation.

GROSS: What explanation did he give you for why he's a pirate?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: A lot of these guys say the same thing. They say they were fishermen, minding their own business, and when the government collapsed, all of sudden, the waters of Somalia became a free-for-all. Big fishing ships from around the world came to pilfer the resources from their seas. So they had to take up arms to protect their coastline.

GROSS: And do you think that's the genuine answer?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: I think there's some validity to how it began, but it has quickly morphed into a pure criminal enterprise. And this guy, you know, was laughing about all the different ransoms he had secured and said that he had, you know, gotten millions of dollars. And a big question is: Where's the money going? Because it's not like there are, you know, skyscrapers rising out of the desert in Somalia, or these guys are driving around Bentleys.

The person I talked to, his name was Absher Boya(ph), was dangerously thin, you know, maybe six-foot-four, 160 pounds. He was trying to hit me up for some money to buy him cigarettes. And I said, hey, wait, I thought you had just, you know, hijacked all these ships and have millions of dollars.

And he's, like, listen, we have to split it between, you know, a lot of people. We have guards and underlings and businessmen and, you know, a whole and whole family networks to pay. And every time we get a big ransom, we divide it up, and it disappears, you know, within days.

GROSS: Do you think he that was true?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: I think it's true to some extent. I think and he, this guy, a lot of these guys are very, you know, they're obviously street-smart. And he was telling me he hadn't been educated. Many of the pirates I've spoken to said, you know, they never went to school, just like a lot of children in Somalia today.

But he was saying if you don't have any experience handling money, once you get it, you don't know what to do with it. And that seemed to make some sense to me.

GROSS: So when you go to Somalia, you've written you hire 10 gunmen when you go to Somalia because you have to. Otherwise, you don't stand a chance. So how do you find gunmen? I mean, you're not going to go on Craigslist or Google for gunmen.

Mr. GETTLEMAN: No, no, you have to work through contacts that you have. It's all based on trust because the amount that you pay these gunmen to guard you is way less than what they would get if they kidnapped you and then tried to ransom you back.

And we've seen that. Several journalists have been kidnapped, sometimes by guards that were ostensibly working for them. And then it was this whole protracted drama where, you know, weeks went by, and a lot of money changed hands, and then finally, the journalists or aid workers were freed.

So it's a very trust-based society. In the absence of more formal institutions, everything is based on personal reputations. So if you're invited by the right person, who says I will guarantee your security, you are a guest of mine, if anything happens to you, I look stupid, that person then has a motivation to make sure nothing happens to you. And that's how we operate.

So if we go to Mogadishu, we check in with the right authorities, we tell them what we want to do, they offer to give us some protection, a militia, we then work out a deal where we pay the guards a certain amount per day, we buy their food, we buy their khat, which is this leaf that Somalis chew that's slightly it's like a slight upper that gives you a buzz or a high and that's the only way to operate.

And it's not great because if you walk into a refugee camp or you go meet with a pirate or you just want to kind of get a sense of daily life in a place like Mogadishu, you're constantly shadowed by this wall of gunmen behind you that are making sure nobody kidnaps you.

GROSS: So has anything really bad happened to you in Somalia?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: No, it hasn't. I've been lucky. The trips I make there are very focused. We try to minimize our time on the ground. There are some local journalists that have helped me immensely and have looked out for everything, including my life.

So, no, I've been to Somalia more than a dozen times, maybe close to 20 or 30 times, and it's never easy, but it's always really, really interesting.

GROSS: My guest, Jeffrey Gettleman, will be back in the second half of the show. He's the East Africa bureau chief for the New York Times. I'm Terry Gross, and this is FRESH AIR.

(Soundbite of music)

GROSS: This is FRESH AIR. Im Terry Gross, back with Jeffrey Gettleman, East Africa bureau chief for the New York Times. He covers 12 countries, including Kenya, Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, which he describes as the most dangerous place in the world. He's won two Overseas Press Club awards.

You wrote an amazing story recently about child soldiers in Somalia. And one of the things that made the story so interesting was that the child soldiers you were writing about werent fighting for the warlords, they were fighting with the government. Now granted, it's not a very stable government, it's not a very powerful government, but still, the child soldiers were being used by the government. Why is that so significant?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: Well, because this government that's trying to rule Somalia is purely surviving on Western aid. If it weren't for the United States and the United Nations and the European Union, this government and Somalia would collapse probably within hours. And that's what a lot of people were very upset about is that why is it that the U.N., which has been on numerous passionate campaigns to get armies to demobilize children from their forces, why is it that that same U.N. is giving money to the Somali government, which is openly employing child soldiers.

And the same for the United States, the United States has criticized many African rebel forces for kidnapping and conscripting children like the LRA, which has made that its signature tactic. And yet, at the same time, the American government is pumping millions of dollars and weapons into the Somali government and they're openly employing child soldiers.

We spent a couple days on the streets of Mogadishu and saw these kids working. One of them, a kid named Awil, looked like he was 10 or 11 years old. His commander thought maybe he was 12, and he was carrying a heavy AK47 automatic rifle, searching cars and stopping cars and he could barely see over the hood of these cars. And he was a tough little kid. He was addicted to khat. He smoked cigarettes. He looked like somebody you didnt want to tangle with. And we met many boys like that.

One of them, a 15-year-old had been shot in the arm and he said that he had been sent to Uganda for training when he was 12 years old. And a lot of that training that's going on in Uganda is directly overseen by American military advisors. So, it seemed like in the rush to stand up an army to protect this very weak, fragile government, the government was not discriminating, they weren't vetting and they were basically grabbing anybody who could carry a gun, even though a lot of these kids could barely do that.

GROSS: Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think in response to your article the Somali government and the U.S. government denied any knowledge of the government using child soldiers.

Mr. GETTLEMAN: Well, the Somali government sent out a mixed signal. They said they were not knowingly using any child soldiers but at the same time, they said that they would demobilize any children in their forces. The U.S. government had said officially we are not aware of the Somali government doing this. Yet, unofficially, I had government officials telling me that they were aware this was a problem. They had been trying to convince the Somali government to stop this practice and that they were offering them help. And the same goes for UNICEF. UNICEF had told me that they had been, you know, they had very specific plans for the government to demobilize these kids but the Somali government was too disorganized to respond to them.

GROSS: So is the United States possibly going to be charged with any crime if it knowingly supports a government that is using child soldiers?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: Well, I didnt know it at the time but after I did the story a couple senators in Washington complained to the State Department and said that there were actually American laws that may have been violated because there are certain provisions in Congress where the United States government is not supposed to give any resources to a military that uses child soldiers. So there's now calls for investigations in Washington and for a deeper look into this to see if any American money is actually going to pay child soldiers in Somalia.

GROSS: So looking at Somalia a little bit more, you know, Somalia has been in a state of virtually no government or a very weak government for a long time. Is there anything that has worked that the international community has done to try to bring order to Somalia, as opposed to things that have backfired? I mean, where are we now in terms of intervention from other countries?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: Well, its a pretty discouraging track record. In the early 1990s, the U.S. sent this huge mission under the first President Bush and then under President Clinton that ended very disgracefully with the Black Hawk Down incident in 1993, where Somali militiamen in flip-flops with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades shot down two American helicopters and killed a number of American servicemen. And after that the U.S. got discouraged and basically pulled out tens of thousands of troops. That intervention was considered a failure.

Since then, the U.N. has been involved to a lesser degree in trying to help the Somalis stand up a government but none of it has really worked. And now there's a new dynamic and that is that a lot of people worry that even if this government in Somalia, even if it's not very good, it's better than the alternative, which is a Somalia that is totally ruled by the Shabab. However, people are beginning to challenge that convention wisdom and this new theory has emerged in the last couple months called constructive disengagement.

And some people are saying that it's time for the international community to disengage from Somalia, that all their interference, all it's really done is made things worse. It's further radicalized the population. It's given a cause to some of these rebel groups that really didnt have a cause. So some people say maybe its better for the Somalis just to fight it out among themselves. And yes, it will be bloody and it will get worse in the short-term, but maybe in the long-term that's the only way to have a real durable reconciliation.

GROSS: Does it look like the international community is headed toward that constructive disengagement?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: I dont think people are ready to call it quits yet. But as the days go on, when this government really doesnt do much, they're still holed-up in this hilltop palace in central Mogadishu and trying to fight it out in these neighborhoods around there. They control very little territory. They dont deliver any services. Theyve been totally paralyzed in the last couple months by infighting for this post or that post. And these positions are more or less meaningless because the government really doesnt do much.

So I think we're in a discouraging phase of support for the government but we're not quite at the point

yet where people are ready to totally give up.

GROSS: If youre just joining us, my guest is Jeffrey Gettleman. He's the East Africa bureau chief for The New York Times and is on a brief trip to the United States. Jeffrey, let's take a short break here and then we'll talk some more.

This is FRESH AIR.

(Soundbite of music)

GROSS: If youre just joining us, my guest is Jeffrey Gettleman. He's the East Africa bureau chief for The Times.

Jeffrey, you also covered Iraq, and in 2004, you were captured in Fallujah. And your life was in jeopardy when you were captured. And that was in 2004, and ever since then youve continued to cover war zones in Iraq and through Africa. So I'm wondering what gives you the courage and the stamina to keep being in war zones in spite of the fact that you nearly lost your life in one of them?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: It's not an easy question to answer why you would put yourself through all that or put your family through that. In the part of the world that I work there are fewer and fewer journalists that have the resources, that have the big media organizations that can back them up, that can spend the money, that can take these risks and report these stories. And if, you know, Somali journalists can't do it, its too dangerous for them. They're under incredible pressures of their own. They're not free to write about what they want to write.

One of the consequences of the child soldier story we did was the government was so outraged at our report that they were using child soldiers that they have threatened the local journalists that helped us report that story. And in some cases, some of the people that worked with us had to flee the country. And that's just an example of how difficult it is in many of these countries to illuminate whats happening.

GROSS: But let me just ask you, in a situation like that, how do you weigh the fact that some people's lives are now at risk with the fact that you were able to expose a very, very important story about child soldiers?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: I think it's a really tough balance to strike. You know, you could use a utilitarian way of looking at it and say, well, we're helping more people by getting the word out and it might endanger a few of us but the greater good is served by exposing what's happening and maybe these kids will be demobilized and maybe other children in Somalia won't have to go through what these boys are going through that we interviewed. But it's very difficult.

I was arrested in Ethiopia in 2007 and put in jail for a week with my wife, who was shooting video for The New York Times. It was a terrifying experience. All we were trying to do was to get to a part of the country where there's been serious allegations of human rights abuse, where the population is really under the thumb of the military. It's like a Darfur situation in that part of Ethiopia and we were just trying to go there and put a spotlight on it and we were branded as public enemies by the government of Ethiopia.

And you get caught up in a sense of duty. And maybe that sounds too self-righteous, but you really begin to think that if you dont take these risks yourself nobody's going to know what's happening in these places. And there's a lot of lives at stake and there's horrible things that are going on every day. And if nobody wants to take the risk to go into these places, then nobody is ever going to know what's happening there.

GROSS: Were you and your wife in the same cell in Ethiopia?

Mr. GETTLEMAN: We were at the beginning and then they split us up. And at one point they marched me out into the desert with a gun at my back and said, we'll do with you whatever we want. You have to tell us exactly who you talked to and why youre here and give us your sources and give us your information. And I said, no. And it was terrifying. This again is an American ally that gets hundreds of millions of dollars each year and American taxpayer money and the military there is accused of being horrendously brutal to its own people and I got a little taste of that.

These guys had, you know, they didnt care at all that I was a journalist for an American newspaper, that I had an American passport, that I had a legitimate visa. They didnt care about that at all. They kept us incommunicado for a week, transferred us from secret prison to secret prison and gave us a taste of what really happens in a country like that.

GROSS: Well, Jeffrey Gettleman, thank you so much for talking with us. And congratulations on all the, you know, excellent reporting youve been doing. Thank you very much.

Mr. GETTLEMAN: Thank you.

GROSS: Jeffrey Gettleman is the East Africa bureau chief for The New York Times. He's currently in the U.S. on a three-week visit. You'll find links to his recent stories about Somalia on our website, freshair.npr.org.

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A Defro (rasalula) wrote:
This guy is so full of it. His answer regarding why some militias mutilate proves just how full of it he is. He has no idea what he is talking about, but counts on the fact that his readers know even less. He has spent the better part of the last 4 years lying about and misrepresenting east Africa. And contrary to this clown, Somalia has not received "enormous diplomatic attention". That is a blatantly incorrect statement.
Friday, July 02, 2010 3:16:36 AM
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Meg Lakeman (sunshinetax) wrote:
Why hasn't our goverment learned from their mistakes? I don't think proping up foreign governments has a proven track record. Actually I can't think of a single example. Nicaragua maybe?

O.T., Jeffrey Gettleman is hot. Also, excellent reporter.
Thursday, July 01, 2010 7:38:00 PM
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manley p hall (totafot) wrote:
This show is about rallying support from the brain dead bleeding heart left.
These groups are funded by the CIA to destabilize the region and build up public outrage and support for AFRICOM intervention.

The CIA/NPR is right there spreading the propaganda.
Don't buy into this hype!
The reason these African nations are becoming so radicalized is because of the colonial empires that have raped them for centuries.
And this BS high brow moralizing is disgusting.
Look at yourself America/Britain! You are the reason this type of chaos and radicalization is happening.
Pat yourself on the back, your a brainwashed American!
Thursday, July 01, 2010 4:40:35 PM
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John Morgan (JMMorgan) wrote:
It sounds like Gettleman is doing some good reporting, but he shows a glaring lack of candor about how Somalia came to this crisis that drastically limits the value of what he has to say.

Somalia, under the Islamic Courts Union, was well on its way to stability in 2006. The U.S. destroyed that window of opportunity because of our extreme paranoia about any ilslamic government. We encouraged Ethiopian invasion to destroy the ICU. The result was to plunge Somalia into the disaster that has ensued since. One more example of where U.S. meddling for selfish reasons has brought misery and disaster to other countries.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/26/opinion/26iht-edlone.4017649.html
http://www.alternet.org/story/46424/
Thursday, July 01, 2010 2:58:05 PM
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Mr Medium (mram50) wrote:
If you want to know why the US should support Somaliland instead of Somalia simply read http://somalilandpress.com/ .. We need to stop propping up never ending wars in favor of peace, but until the profit motive for war is removed we'll keep supporting warlords instead of people of peace.
Thursday, July 01, 2010 2:38:50 PM
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Mr Medium (mram50) wrote:
What possible reason would the US have for not recognizing the legitimacy of Somaliland where democracy is flourishing and instead we dump millions into funding corrupted regiems in Solamlia where there is no chance of peace. It probably has much more to do with the fact that there is much more money to be made selling the tools of killing in a place where neverending warfare if the rule rather than exception. Somaliland is peaceful and yet we refuse to recognize their legitimacy.
Cut off the funding to support never ending wars and start supporting peace.
Thursday, July 01, 2010 2:34:19 PM
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D F (Fizzle) wrote:
I hate to say it, but the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

The reason why the majority of these countries are messed up is because other countries think that they know what is good for them and impose a solution on them.
It typically ends with an outside power propping up a dictatorship simply because the dictator provides order.
Thursday, July 01, 2010 2:21:05 PM
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Erick Williams (E_Dub) wrote:
No safe place in Somali is a total lie Jeffrey. My wife just came back from spending a month in Northern Somali (Bosaaso) visiting her dad. It's totally safe. You sleep with windows open, business and shop owners exchange and walk around with money like it's nothing. You can't do that in most city's in America .The local police force don't even carry guns only sticks. So this propaganda by Jeffrey Gettleman is total BS he's most likely about to try to write a book or something and needs to exaggerate is stories.
Thursday, July 01, 2010 2:14:20 PM
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Mr Medium (mram50) wrote:
It probably sounds nuts, but since few international organizations seem willing or able to control these monster thug gangs perhaps someday a non-profit army will emerge whose sole purpose is to completely eradicate and wipe out these murdering thugs. An amry funded soley by donations and manned soley by volunteers and is run by dedicated people who have no dog in the fight other than to rid these nations of murdering thugs. Sounds like a wild dream, but at this point I see no real workable alternative.
Thursday, July 01, 2010 1:37:40 PM
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